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Mentor's Letters,

ADDRESSED TO

YOUTH.

By Edmund Rack.

—K

"I conſider an human ſoul without education, like marble in the "quarry, which ſhows none of its inherent beauties 'till the "ſkill of the poliſher fetches out the colours, makes the ſurface "ſhine, and diſcovers every ornamental cloud, ſpot, and vein, "that runs through the body of it. Education, after the ſame "manner, when it works upon a noble mind, draws out to "view every latent virtue and perfection, which, without ſuch "helps, are never able to make their appearance.

"ADDISON."

The Third Edition, Reviſed and Corrected.

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MDCCLXXVIII.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

TO THE READER.

THE *ſubſtance of the following Letters was written about five years ago, and deſigned by the Author for a few of his ſelect young friends:—But having repeatedly been adviſed to lay them before the public at large, by ſome who thought they might prove uſeful, he now reſpectfully ſubmits them to the candid and ſerious of every denomination.*

It is however not improbable, that ſome of his readers may think theſe Letters written in a ſtile too ſerious for thoſe to whom they are addreſſed; but let it be conſidered, that the ſubject is profeſſedly of a ſerious nature.—To treat the great buſineſs and conduct of human life, in a light airy ſtile, *would be injurious to its dignity, and unbecoming its Author.*

The very favourable reception the former editions of theſe Letters have met with from the public, and the teſtimonies of approbation

the Author has received from divers perſons of diſtinction and eminence in the Literary world, demand his moſt reſpectful acknowledgement:— And as in the preſent edition many corrections have been made, and ſome improvements (at leaſt) attempted, he flatters himſelf the work will not be found leſs worthy the attention of his readers than in its firſt appearance.

Bath, May 20th, 1778.

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MENTOR's LETTERS, &c.

LETTER I.

I HAVE now nearly attained to what is uſually termed the meridian of life; a ſeaſon perhaps more ſuitable for the forming proper ſentiments of things, and communicating inſtruction, than either youth or old age. On a retroſpective view of my paſt actions, I have frequently thought, that, had I my time to live over again, I could employ many of thoſe hours, which being now paſt can never return, much more profitably than I have done. For altho', through the gracious providence of the "Preſerver of Men," I have been reſtrained from the commiſſion of groſs immorality, yet I find numerous omiſſions of duty, in the performance of which I ought to have been more diligent.

As this conſciouſneſs has frequently been attended with painful reflections on my own account, it has alſo excited the warmeſt wiſhes, that thoſe who are yet in the bloom of active life might conduct themſelves conſiſtently in the various ſtations in which they ſtand, and with the character they ought to ſuſtain in it. How far the following cautions and advice may promote theſe great and valuable ends, is not my buſineſs to determine: I can only *wiſh* them ſucceſs: and, ſhould any thing I may write prove the means of preventing improper conduct in any of our youth, or excite them to the practice of ſobriety and virtue, my motive for thus addreſſing them will be fully anſwered.

THERE are ſome truths which ought to be indelibly impreſſed on your minds, and the frequent ſubjects of your remembrance and reverent attention. Of this kind are the following:—

THAT you are rational and accountable beings:

THAT you are continually under the notice of a pure, holy, and omniſcient GOD, who can neither be deceived nor mocked by falſe pretences; but who will finally judge of, and *reward*, all men according as their works have been:

THAT, as by nature you are led to *deſire*, you were created to *enjoy*, happineſs both here and hereafter: AND,

AND, that this happineſs can no otherwiſe be attained, than by a diligent attention to the means appointed by the Deity for the accompliſhment of that deſirable and happy end.

THOSE means are, in brief, the practice of morality and virtue, and a due regard to the great duties of religion. To effect theſe great and excellent purpoſes, the Deity hath placed a divine principle of light and knowledge in every mind; which, although diſtinguiſhed by a variety of names among the different ſocieties in the chriſtian world, is one in nature and univerſal.

IT is the *ſupreme reaſon* or law of moral rectitude and truth—the *light* which (more or leſs) enlightens every man,—"*the Grace of* GOD *which bringeth* "*Salvation*,"—"the word nigh in the heart,"—the ſtill ſmall voice in the conſcience, which reproves for evil, and ſpeaks peace when we do well. To this ſupreme monitor and guide, we ought carefully to attend; for this only can direct us ſafely, through the perilous paths of life, to eternal happineſs.

THE practice of morality conſiſts in the performance of thoſe ſocial and relative duties which ariſe from our reſpective ſtations. The duties of religion are thoſe which we owe more immediately to GOD as our creator, preſerver, and judge in the

end of days. On our faithful diſcharge of theſe ſeveral duties, depend our happineſs in time, and the ſtability of our hope of enjoying a full fruition of bliſs in eternity. Therefore, if in *time* or in *eternity* there is any thing to *hope* or *fear*, it is highly requiſite that we regard the ſacred obligations of virtue and religion, in proportion to the value and permanency of thoſe bleſſings they confer upon us.

We are told in the volume of Sacred Truth, that "*the fear of the* Lord *is the beginning of* "*wiſdom*;"—this, the uniform experience of wiſe and good men in all ages has abundantly verified:—without it, there is no true wiſdom—no laſting happineſs. It preſerves from evil, and leads to peace and happineſs here, while it preſents us with the joyful proſpect of ſupreme felicity hereafter. This fear proceeds from a juſt ſenſe of what we are; what we ought to be; the wiſdom, power, and goodneſs of the Deity; and the grand and glorious purpoſe for which we were created.

These are awful ſubjects for our meditation, yet the moſt important of any on which the human mind can be employed; ſubjects in which our preſent and everlaſting intereſt is deeply concerned; and therefore frequently to ponder them in our minds, is a mark of the greateſt wiſdom.

Resist carefully the firſt temptations to evil; theſe are more eaſily withſtood than thoſe which ſucceed them. To hold a parley or deliberate with ſuch enemies, is to increaſe their power, and give them the victory over us.

Encourage, and cloſe in with, the firſt ſuggeſtions of virtue; they will thereby grow ſtronger, and become ſufficient to produce good and laudable actions.

Such is the beauty and excellency of virtue, that ſhe ever appears truly amiable to all whoſe eyes are not blinded by the miſts of falſe prejudice, diſobedience, and deception;—the more ſhe is contemplated, the more comely ſhe appears.

Such is the inherent deformity of vice, that (as the poet juſtly obſerves) ſhe,

"To be hated, needs but to be ſeen."

For this reaſon, vice frequently aſſumes the maſk of innocence and virtue, before the view of young minds; and thereby becomes a more dangerous enemy;—to ſuch, familiarity only can gain her an eaſy admittance, or eſtabliſh her authority.

The mind of youth is a kind of *tabula raſa*;—at firſt unſtained with guilt, and unadorned with virtue. May the fair page never be polluted!—

may

may it become inſcribed with every excellent virtue—and be thereby rendered comely in the ſight of Men, of Angels, of the Deity!

You are ſuſceptible of the moſt tender, yet laſting impreſſions; be therefore careful to admit nothing that may prove injurious to your happineſs.

Cherish every friendly tender emotion towards one another; and regard your fellow-creatures properly in their various relations. Thoſe whoſe rank in life is *ſuperior* to your own, are entitled to your reſpect and honour; your *equals* may juſtly claim your friendſhip and eſteem; and your *inferiors* have an equal right to your kind aſſiſtance and protection. Compaſſionate the poor and indigent—they are your *brethren*, and equally dear to the *univerſal Parent* as thoſe who are incircled with external pomp and ſplendor. The *Peaſant* as well as the *Peer*, the *Servant* as well as the *Maſter*, is formed for the ſame glorious purpoſe, and entitled to the ſame rewards in eternity. Terreſtrial diſtinctions, and titular dignity, are nothing in the ſight of Him who "*of one blood hath made all nations to dwell on the face of the earth.*"

Endeavour by your friendly aſſiſtance to lighten the afflictions of the poor, and to increaſe their happineſs.—Love all men, and God above all.

all.——Love is that ſacred cement which connects every claſs of human ſociety in a firm and happy union,—it riſes ſtill higher—even through all the ſuperior ranks and orders of glorified ſpirits, and the laſt link of this celeſtial chain is fixed to the throne of GOD. In proportion as we cultivate this excellent principle, happineſs will attend us. I cannot injure the man whom I love, either in perſon, property, or reputation. Were all men influenced by this divine virtue, the deſtruction of our ſpecies and the devaſtation of kingdoms would ſoon be at an end;—the world would no longer bleed to ſatisfy ambition, but peace would extend her olive branches "*from ſea to ſea, and from the* "*river to the ends of the earth.*"

BENEVOLENT actions have this peculiar excellence attending them, that the actor always participates in the happineſs which he endeavours to communicate or increaſe. Actions of a contrary nature have an oppoſite tendency; they bring ſhame, remorſe, and puniſhment.

SHUN bad company as you would ſhun deadly poiſon—what the latter is to the body, the former is to the mind. Sin is contagious, and like an epidemical diſeaſe, infects all who come within the ſphere of its agency. *Evil communications corrupt good manners.*—This is an ancient Apoſtolic apothegm,

thegm, the truth of which we daily ſee confirmed in the unhappy experience of multitudes. Many of our youth, who, in a ſtate of native innocence, were not deſtitute of good intentions, have received unſpeakable injury from the contaminating influence of wicked company: they have at firſt viewed the vicious conduct of their lewd companions with a kind of horror; but by degrees theſe ſtrong impreſſions have ſubſided; and, although they may not have *actively* joined in their iniquity, yet thro' cuſtom they have at length been induced to behold it with a criminal indifference—till the voice of reaſon and conſcience being loſt in the ſcenes of intemperance, riot, and diſorder, they have, in the end, joined their wicked aſſociates in the moſt flagrant crimes.

Be therefore careful with whom you aſſociate. —Innocence is a jewel of ineſtimable value!—worlds want worth to purchaſe it! Delight not in too much company—rather ſeek the pure tranquil pleaſures that reſult from ſtudy and contemplation. Have but few familiars, and let thoſe few be choſen from among the wiſe and the virtuous.

Fine parts, learning, or rank in life, without virtue, are not ſufficient qualifications in a man whom you admit to your intimacy and friendſhip. You will derive more ſolid advantage, and profitable

profitable inſtruction, from one hour's converſe with a man of ſobriety and virtue, than from a year's intimacy with one of more ſhining talents, if joined with profligate principles and a licentious conduct.

THE greater a bad man's accompliſhments are, the more dangerous he is to ſociety, and the leſs fit for a companion. Vice in a pleaſing garb is moſt likely to prove deſtructive.

REJECT the firſt intruſions of *Pride*.—"it was "not made for man," and very ill becomes him. *Pride* is a *Proteus* which, the more eaſily to gain admiſſion in the mind, aſſumes innumerable forms; but there is one certain teſt whereby it may always be diſcovered:—all its ſecret ſuggeſtions centre in the exaltation of ſelf, and a comparative depreciating of others. At firſt a *pigmy*, it ſecretly ſolicits an entrance into the mind; when once admitted, it will enlarge to a *monſter*, and uſurp ſole dominion there. What, alas! has vain man to be proud of? If he be wiſe, wealthy, comely, and honourable, theſe are not ſelf-acquired accompliſhments, but the gracious gifts of his Creator, for which humble thankſgiving is due. To whatever attainments he arrives, whatever excellencies he may poſſeſs, they all proceed from the bounty of that Being who can diveſt him of them all in a moment, and leave him an ideot.

If you conſider your own numerous imperfections, and the infinitely great obligations you are under to the Source of every Bleſſing, it will produce Humility, and this is the moſt excellent ſtate of the human mind. In proportion as we are proud of our own accompliſhments, ſelf-confidence will enſue, which is the certain path to ruin. An humble truſt in, and continual dependance upon, the greateſt and beſt of Beings, for ſtrength and preſervation, is the only ſtate of ſafety, and will beſt promote our preſent as well as eternal happineſs.

Humility in ourſelves will produce kindneſs for and from others. To be humble, kind, benevolent, and grateful, is to poſſeſs a diſpoſition of mind ever acceptable to that God whoſe Omniſcience pervades our moſt ſecret thoughts as well as actions; and pleaſing in the ſight of wiſe men. "The humble he will teach of his ways, and the "meek he will lead in the paths of true judge-"ment."—Happy are thoſe youth who are thus taught and led;—the preſervation of Divine Providence will protect them here, and their end will be "joy unſpeakable and full of glory."

Friendship is the balm of life—the "cordial "drop" diſpenſed by Heaven to exhilarate its languor, and alleviate its cares:—yet you can have but

but *few* friends in the extenſive ſenſe of the term. Such is the frailty and depravity of human nature, that a *few* only are ſuſceptible of, or know how to cultivate a true and laſting friendſhip.—It is indeed a plant of celeſtial extract, "of tender vio-"lations apt to die;"—an exotic on earth, it will not flouriſh in every ſoil. The man who, in the unreſerved openneſs of his heart, expoſes his weakneſs freely, and (if I may be allowed the metaphor) *ſtrips himſelf naked* before his ſuppoſed friends, will find among them more *Hams* than *Japhets*.—Many who may be warm in the profeſſion of friendſhip will, either from a fond deſire of revealing ſecrets, or the baſer motive of detraction, expoſe his failings with cruel aggravations.

The baſe officiouſneſs of ſuch detractors may, perhaps, receive approbation from the ſelf-righteous and the profane, for *they* will not conſider, that it is only exerciſed by theſe betrayers of friendſhip, to gain reputation on the compariſon, and to hide ſtill greater deformity in themſelves: therefore, in the choice of your friends, be cautious whom you admit under that ſacred character. A *falſe* friend will injure you more than a thouſand open enemies, and is, in reality, a very deſpicable character.

LETTER II.

INNOCENT amuſements, to fill up the hours of leiſure and relaxation from the more important buſineſs of life, are undoubtedly neceſſary. Youthful recreations may be indefinitely diverſified, yet there are but few, in compariſon of the whole, which reaſon can approve; the greater part, as (at beſt) they cannot tend to any uſeful purpoſe, are vain and fooliſh: they afford no information to the mind—empty and unprofitable in themſelves, they leave no pleaſing reflections behind them, and are too low for the dignity of reaſonable beings to ſet any value upon. But amuſement preſents itſelf in a variety of pleaſing forms that are uſeful and innocent, tending to promote our happineſs, by cheering the gloom of life and leſſening its cares.

In the choice of your amuſements, carefully avoid all ſuch as have any immoral tendency:—under this claſs may be ranked all ſports which tend to inflict any degree of pain on the inferior orders of living creatures;—theſe, as well as man, were created to enjoy happineſs proportioned to their

their perceptions and rank in the creation; and therefore, to inflict unneceſſary pain on them is ſinful. To take pleaſure in any action which gives pain to other beings is at once irrational and cruel; it betrays a diſpoſition of mind very oppoſite to that of goodneſs, and is juſtly cenſurable by wiſe and good men, as well as offenſive to that God whoſe "tender mercies are over all his works." Hence it follows, that many of the moſt admired and faſhionable ſports of this age are juſtly reprehenſible, and very reproachful to a people profeſſing the benevolent doctrines of chriſtianity. The boaſted ſanction of thoſe, who, from their rank and ſuperior abilities, ought to ſet a better example, will not in the leaſt extenuate the guilt of actions which are in their own nature ſinful; the example of millions will not avail in the day of final deciſion, or in the leaſt degree leſſen the weight of our condemnation.

The rage for diſſipation and unlawful pleaſure, which ſo generally prevails among moſt ranks of people, in this age of luxury and falſe refinement, is a melancholy proof of our degeneracy from the ſimplicity of ancient manners.

The cruel diverſions of horſe-racing, cock-fighting, bull-baiting, &c. &c. are a reproach to any civilized people; and there can ſcarcely be a greater

greater contradiction than to ſuppoſe thoſe to be real chriſtians, who delight in, and practiſe them: ſuch are ſo far from obeying the benevolent precepts of chriſtianity, that they have loſt or endeavour to extinguiſh the common feelings of humanity.—This cenſure may, perhaps, be deemed too ſevere by thoſe who delight in theſe ſavage diverſions; but reaſon will juſtify and ſupport it againſt all the cavils of ſophiſtry, or flimſy arguments advanced in their favour.

THERE are alſo many other amuſements you ought carefully to avoid; among which I include all that tend to inflame, or ſtrengthen your animal paſſions, which ought ever to be kept in a due ſubordination to reaſon.

OUR paſſions require a ſtrict diſcipline; for whenever, through intemperate indulgence, they mutiny or uſurp dominion in the little kingdom of the mind, tumult, confuſion, and anarchy, enſue: and when that harmonious order and juſt regularity are inverted, from whence ariſes propriety of conduct, that ſweet tranquility and peace of mind is deſtroyed, which conſtitute the higheſt mental enjoyment.

THERE are indeed other amuſements leſs criminal than thoſe above-mentioned, but which you ought,

ought, if not wholly to reject, at leaſt to uſe very cautiouſly.—Theſe (without deſcending to particulars) may be comprehended in general under this definition, *i. e.* amuſements which cannot anſwer any other purpoſe than to afford momentary entertainment, or, in the faſhionable though improper phraſe, to "kill time."

In following ſuch amuſements, we ſpend our time (at beſt) unprofitably, and often in a manner worſe than inſignificant.

Our ſtay in this world is uncertain, and the buſineſs of life is a concern of unſpeakable importance. To waſte that time in trifling, which once paſt can never be recalled, is a ſpecies of folly for which we muſt account at its awful concluſion. The wiſe in heart prize their time in proportion to its ineſtimable value. The greateſt aſſiduity in performing the duties of life is highly requiſite in beings who have no certainty of its duration: for, proportioned to the day is the buſineſs of the day, and "when the night [*death*] cometh, no man can work."

But it will perhaps be urged, that ſuch is the conſtitution of our frame, that an unremitting attention to the eſſential duties of life is a taſk too heavy for humanity;—that ſome relaxation of

hought

thought and action, ſome unbending of the mind from the primary application of its powers, is neceſſary for us in this imperfect ſtate. This I readily grant; and it leads me to the conſideration of thoſe amuſements which, being not inconſiſtent with reaſon, may be innocently indulged in the hours of relaxation from higher ſtudies. Of this kind are, agreeable and lively converſation; manly and healthful exerciſes; natural and experimental philoſophy; botany and gardening, and a ſurvey of nature in the beautiful exhibition and variety of her productions. Theſe will conſtitute a fund inexhauſtible in its nature, and afford abundant entertainment and pleaſure to the ingenious and inquiſitive mind. In employments of this rational nature, the ſatisfaction we receive is greatly increaſed by this conſideration, that they not only furniſh a preſent entertainment, but tend alſo to ennoble our minds, and exalt our ſentiments reſpecting the Divine Original of all that is great, excellent, and good. By "the things that are "ſeen," (the amazing diſplay of God's power and wiſdom in the viſible creation) the mind is led to inveſtigate thoſe which are inviſible, "even his "Eternal Power and Godhead." The more we contemplate on that adorable power, wiſdom, and goodneſs, which the phœnomena of nature ſo glorioufly exhibit, the ſtronger will be our ſenſations of love and gratitude to the Great and Univerſal Cauſe.

By

By thus employing our minds on objects ſuited to the dignity of our nature, we ſhall be weaned from things unworthy our purſuit;—our faculties and powers of perception and action will be expanded, and ſtrengthened to withſtand the illuſions of vanity, and eſcape the entanglements of vice.

The pleaſures which flow from exploring the wonders of creation and providence, comparing means with ends, tracing the various relations they bear to each other, and a ſerene contemplation on the works of the Deity, are as far ſuperior to thoſe of a ſenſual and animal kind, as the Heavens are higher than the Earth. By indulging the latter, the Soul, although of divine extract, and immortal in its nature, is degraded from its original excellence:—by cultivating the former, its connection with inferior things is weakened; it riſes to the ſummit of its perfection and the proper glory of its nature.

Thus, even our amuſements, when wiſely choſen, and temperately followed, have a tendency to exalt the mind, not into pride, but to real dignity, and to fit us for the diſcharge of our more eſſential duties;—they not only enliven the gloom of life, but promote the perfection and prime end of our being.

THE reaſons why ſo many of our youth delight in the amuſements of mere vanity, and even in ſome of a more criminal kind, are many and various.—The want of proper education—the force of habit—the influence of bad example,—all conſpire to fix their minds on little and mean purſuits. —They either never had, or through inattention have loſt, that true taſte for pleaſure, thoſe acute perceptions, and delicate feelings, which ſenſible and virtuous minds experience in the right exerciſe of their natural and moral powers. Being thus deſtitute of the means of acquiring that "ſomething unpoſſeſſed," and filling up that "aching void" which they feel within, they ſeek to derive happineſs from a courſe of action calculated to deſtroy it.

As example is more ſtriking than precept, let me take the moral pencil, and draw the portraits of two young perſons, who, in the purſuit of pleaſure, trod the oppoſite paths of virtue and vice.

FLORIO had attained his eighteenth year;—he was handſome, good-natured, ſprightly, ſenſible, and poſſeſſed a fortune and conſtitution equal to moſt of his cotemporaries. Pleaſure was the object of his ſearch—he purſued her through the extenſive mazes of vanity;—he dreſſed gay, and doubted not but his perſon, vivacity, fortune, and accompliſhments, would gain him free acceſs to her

her temple:—He ſought her in the convivial circle, at the table of riot, and in the chamber of wantonneſs: but, alas! ſought her in vain:—a phantom, which aſſumed her name and form, frequently danced before his deluded imagination, and admitted him to her arms; but the enjoyment was languid, and always embittered, or ſucceeded by that remorſe, which the opiates of amuſement cannot baniſh.

From the example of his gay companions, he was taught to laugh at every thing ſerious; to game till his fortune was embarraſſed; to drink till his conſtitution was ruined and his rational faculties loſt in the cup of inebriation; to gratify every ſenſual appetite, and to pollute his converſation with profane oaths and obſcenity. Thus he ſpent his days in intemperance, and his nights in lewdneſs, which he falſely eſtimated pleaſure.

Those places of faſhionable reſort, where vice triumphs in the abſence of reaſon, were witneſſes of his folly and of his loſſes. The tavern, the theatres, the card-tables, the billiard-rooms, and the bagnio, were his conſtant round of entertainments. To the bottle ſucceeded the play, where he generally furniſhed himſelf with a partner for the night; in whoſe guilty and lewd embraces all ſenſe of honour and morality was ſuſpended. At length, not contented with theſe acquiſitions, he me-

ditates more deteſtable enterprizes: the charms of unſuſpecting virgin innocence are the next objects of his vile wiſhes. In defiance of the moſt ſacred laws human and divine, the diabolical ſcheme is no ſooner formed than executed: ſome unſuſpecting maid becomes a prey to his treacherous artifice: he firſt ruins, then leaves her to the keen upbraidings of her own conſcience, and the cruel reproaches of mankind, while he triumphs in the vile conqueſt, and "glories in his ſhame." Thus by following a courſe of wicked amuſements, falſely called a life of pleaſure, his fortune is diſſipated; his reputation irretrievably loſt; his conſtitution ruined by diſeaſe; and every manly, rational delight baniſhed from his guilty breaſt. In the moments of ſerioufneſs and reflection, the faithful mirror Conſcience preſents a picture, which, like the roll that Ezekiel ſaw, is inſcribed, "within and without, with mourning, lamentation, "and woe!" He ſees his end approaching,—terrors inconceivable cover him!—the gulph of eternity opens before him!—he looks—and ſtarts aghaſt at the proſpect!—the dreadful catalogue of his manifold tranſgreſſions adds to the horror of the ſcene!—In this inſupportable anguiſh of mind life becomes intolerable; and his miſerable exiſtence is terminated by a death full of terror, under the alarming certainty of "*a fearful looking for* "*of Judgment*" in the world to come.

LET

Let us now reverſe the proſpect, and turn our eyes to a more agreeable object.—A youth, who, in the purſuit of pleaſure, governs his paſſions and conduct by the ſacred rules of virtue.—But this ſhall be the ſubject of my next letter.

LETTER III.

EUGENIUS had alſo attained the age of eighteen, and having had a virtuous education, a ſolid foundation was thereby laid for his future improvement: He, as well as Florio, was ſprightly, handſome, ſenſible, and bleſſed with an excellent conſtitution. His fortune, although inferior to that which Florio poſſeſſed, was ſufficient to place him above dependance, and to gratify every reaſonable deſire. His paſſions were equally ſtrong with thoſe of other men, but they were ſtrictly kept within the bounds and under the ſubjection of reaſon and religion. He was ſtrongly ſuſceptible of the charms of pleaſure; but he ſought it in the paths of virtue: his ſearch was not fruitleſs—he enjoyed it in its higheſt refinement. His whole conduct bore the ſignature of wiſdom. Even his amuſements were manly and rational, adapted for laſting

laſting improvement, as well as for preſent gratification.

As he poſſeſſed a native benevolence of heart, which extended to all ſenſitive beings, he took no pleaſure in diverſions which gave them pain, or increaſed the unhappineſs to which they are liable.

On the contrary, ſuch was his philanthrophy, that he deemed it cruelty to ſport with, or take pleaſure in the ſufferings of inferior beings; he judged (and very wiſely) that in proportion as we abuſe them, or unneceſſarily increaſe their unhappineſs, we act in oppoſition to reaſon and the natural principles of compaſſion in the human mind, which teach us that every act of cruelty is offenſive to the God of Mercy. When therefore diverſions of a cruel nature were propoſed to him, he endeavoured to prove their unlawfulneſs, by obſerving, that, however familiar they may have been rendered by the example of the great and little vulgar, they are indeed a diſgrace to reaſonable beings.

Hence his amuſements were chiefly of the innocent kind, and choſen rather to afford mental than ſenſitive pleaſure. He alſo made it a general rule not to repeat the practice of ſuch as had left any diſagreeable impreſſions on his mind.

The company and converſation of wiſe and good men afforded him much ſatisfaction: he made the ſciences his ſtudy—explored the phœnomenona of nature—and, with a pleaſing reverence, contemplated the wonders of Creation and Providence. He found nature replete with variety, which might be explored with profit and delight, and was diligent in his reſearches into the latent cauſes of her operations. The curious progreſs of vegetation, the delicate ſtructure and elegance of plants and flowers, the pleaſing murmurs of the purling rills, the lively verdure of the groves, and the harmony of their inhabitants, were to Eugenius endleſs ſources of ſublime entertainment.

The conſtant ſucceſſion of ſeaſons, and various revolutions of the celeſtial bodies, engaged his attention; and while contemplating on theſe ſtupendous exertions of Divine power and wiſdom, he roſe with Milton, "above the viſible diurnal "ſphere."

He alſo obſerved the various influences of the planets, calculated their immenſe diſtance and dimenſions, and the unceaſing regularity and velocity of their motion in their reſpective orbits. The ſerene ſplendour of the moon "walking in brightneſs" through the vaſt concave of the heavens, encircled with ſtars and planetary worlds, was, in his eſtimation, a ſcene infinitely more magnificent

nificent than the gaudy luſtres in Ranelagh's proud dome, with all its mimic ſcenery and boaſted decorations of art and ſculpture.

He looked towards the inimitable expanſe of Heaven, and its auguſt diſplay of innumerable ſuns and worlds, with religious awe and veneration. The contemplation of ſo grand a ſcene excited him to adore that exalted Being, who fills immenſity, and gives life, beauty, and energy, to his whole creation.

In theſe meditations, his mind was frequently led to apply the fine addreſs of the enraptured Pſalmiſt on a ſimilar occaſion: "When I conſider "the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon "and ſtars which thou haſt ordained, what is man "that thou art mindful of him, or the ſon of "man that thou viſiteſt him?" The infinite diſparity that appeared on a compariſon of this magnificent diſplay of God's power and wiſdom, with man, (a child of the duſt, though animated by the breath of Heaven) ſtruck him with the united ſenſations of humiliation and aſtoniſhment.

At other times, as inclination led, Eugenius made the nature of the elements, the cauſes of gravitation, electricity, the properties of bodies, and the unchangeable laws of matter and motion, the objects

objects of his enquiry. The air-pump furniſhed him with many curious experiments; and the microſcope introduced a new world to his view;—a ſcene no leſs replete with wonders than that which lies open to the unaſſiſted organs of viſion,—a ſcene wherein beauty and ſymmetry are marvelouſly exemplified in thoſe "living organized atoms" which elude the ken of the keeneſt eye.

With theſe, and other rational, inſtructive amuſements, he entertained himſelf and his friends, in thoſe hours which Florio devoted to intemperance, folly, and madneſs.

Nor was he leſs converſant with polite literature and the works of thoſe great maſters of moral wiſ-dom, who have made the human mind, and its various powers, the ſubjects of their accurate inveſtigation. He ſtudied the theory of moral ſcience, not merely as an amuſement to fill up a vacant hour, but from the more excellent motive of reducing it to practice.

His reading was not a barren ſpeculation, for it was his care to realize, in his own conduct, thoſe precepts of wiſdom which he found recommended for the good of mankind. The maxims of prudence and virtue, which he found recorded in the works of ancient as well as modern ſages, ſerved to ſtrengthen the virtuous reſolutions of his mind, and ripen them into action.

In employments of this nature, Eugenius ſpent his leiſure hours; and therein found that true ſatisfaction and happineſs, which the votaries of falſe pleaſure, the empty fops and libertines of the age, through ignorance may laugh at, but have never experienced.

His fortune was not diſſipated with an ungenerous prodigality: he had therefore always a ſufficiency to furniſh him with whatever a reaſonable being can want or wiſh for, and a conſtant fund was ſet apart for charitable uſes.

His table was conſecrated to freedom, friendſhip, and hoſpitality; but riot and luxury were always excluded: it was elegant, though not ſplendid. The pleading ſolicitations of ſuffering indigence never reached his ear in vain. The poor, the afflicted, the aged, partook of his bounty, and were rendered happy by it. The pleaſure he felt in communicating, was equal to that enjoyed by thoſe who received, the gifts of his munificence.

As Virtue was the polar-ſtar to which his actions pointed, he endeavoured to reſtrain his deſires and paſſions within the limits ſhe preſcribes. Love was no ſtranger to his breaſt; he felt its animating force, and entertained the higheſt idea of female excellence

excellence; but ſought to poſſeſs it in that ſacred connection, which to virtuous minds proves a ſource of the pureſt happineſs.—His honour, and regard to religion, prevented his indulging himſelf in thoſe polluted feveriſh joys, wherein FLORIO delighted. He was the guardian, as well as admirer, of female innocence and beauty. Under his protection the fair were ſafe from the wiles of ſeduction, the attack of libertines, and the ſnares of every vile betrayer. This endeared him to the virtuous among them, and ſecured him a permanent intereſt in their hearts. He looked around the beauteous circle for an agreeable partner in life, with whom he might ſhare its joys, and divide its ſorrows: ſuch a one he ſoon found in the accompliſhed SERAPHINA—a woman adorned with every excellent endowment, and whoſe perſonal charms were only exceeded by the ſenſibility and beauties of her mind. With her EUGENIUS was united in thoſe ſacred and tender bands of union which death only can diſſolve, and therein attained the ſummit of earthly felicity. Their life was a ſeries of the moſt exalted friendſhip, as well in ſeaſons of unavoidable affliction and adverſity, as in the ſun-ſhine of health and proſperity. A riſing family, the fruits of their happy union, grew up in a pleaſing ſucceſſion around them; and, being bleſſed with a virtuous education, followed the example of their parents, and proved an unfailing ſource of comfort to them in their old age.

THUS

THUS lived EUGENIUS, a noble pattern of every virtue—beloved by his friends—reſpected by all who knew him—a bleſſing to the poor around him—and the friend of mankind.

IN the moments of retroſpection, he enjoyed the gratulations of an approving conſcience, and the ſecret approbation of that Being who had preſerved him through the viciſſitudes of time to the proſpect of an happy concluſion in his favour. When he looked forward towards the confines of another world, and anticipated the awful hour of his approaching exit, the proſpect was fair and ſerene: no "clouds nor darkneſs" hung upon it to render it the object of his fear. His paſt life and his preſent ſenſations furniſhed a rational ground of hope, that, when removed from time, the glories of eternity would be his bleſſed inheritance for ever.

SUCH was the character of EUGENIUS—I have drawn it for your inſtruction and imitation, that you may "go and do likewiſe"—Revere it you muſt—and to copy after it, in proportion to your ſeveral abilities and ſituations in life, is at once your indiſputable duty, and greateſt intereſt.

LETTER

LETTER IV.

IN my laſt letter, I preſented you with a character, which thoſe eſpecially, who are placed in eaſy and independent circumſtances, would do well to imitate. It now remains for me to point out ſome duties, the performance of which is not leſs neceſſary to the completion of a juſt and amiable character,

THE exerciſe of charity and benevolence has already been hinted at: But permit me to enforce it more fully in this letter. Charity, conſidered as a principle of benevolence in the human heart, is the moſt noble and godlike of all the chriſtian virtues. Gratitude is a virtue which the conſciouſneſs of favours received renders in ſome degree neceſſary; but in pure benevolence, there is ſomething more exalted and godlike, in as much as it is not excited by any prior obligation: it leads to every action that can conduce to the happineſs of human beings; and is the ſacred cement that unites them in the moſt pleaſing bands. If Heaven has bleſſed you with affluence, apply it conſiſtently

ſiſtently with the deſign of the all-bounteous giver—Remember, that, in the ſtrict ſenſe of the term, it is not your own excluſive property, or, in other words, wholly at your own diſpoſal:—the poor, the unfortunate, the diſtreſſed, the widow, and the fatherleſs, have a reaſonable and juſt claim to your benevolence.

THERE is ſomething truly excellent in communicating happineſs to thoſe whoſe lot it is to dwell in the vale of poverty, and to eat with tears the bread of adverſity. Although in the courſe of human events, they are ſtationed beneath you, and deſtitute of thoſe bleſſings of life which you enjoy, think them not, on that account, beneath your notice and kind regard: remember they are your brethren, and have a juſt claim to your friendly aid and protection. Thoſe who ſhut their ears againſt the tender pleadings of poverty, and the cry of diſtreſs, are a reproach to their ſpecies, and far more contemptible than the beggar who ſolicits them for bread. They are governed by a diſpoſition too ſordid to be the offspring of human nature, which ever relents at the preſentation of want and miſery, even in the brute creation.

BE it therefore your care to fan the generous flame of charity, which is inkindled in your breaſts: cheriſh thoſe tender ſenſations of ſympathy

thy which ennoble humanity; that you may thereby animate and enliven thoſe who pine away their days in wretchedneſs, and whom the want of almoſt every human comfort has driven to the borders of deſpair.

Remember, you are only ſtewards of the bleſſings you enjoy, and that, in the end of days, a juſt account muſt be rendered to what uſes they have been appropriated. You may, indeed, lawfully gratify every reaſonable wiſh, and enjoy temperately, and with gratitude, all the real bleſſings of life: but bear in mind always, that apart is due to thoſe whoſe numerous wants plead inceſſantly for your kind aſſiſtance. When objects really miſerable preſent themſelves, the uncertainty of their merit, and in ſome caſes, even their known demerit, ought not to prevent the extenſion of our charity. There is a kind of covetouſneſs which, in ungenerous minds, aſſumes the name of prudence: this excites them to a keen inveſtigation of the characters of the diſtreſſed, with a ſecret hope of finding cauſe to with-hold their aſſiſtance. To minds of this ſtamp, merit ſcarcely ever appears in rags: actions, which in others would paſs uncenſured and unobſerved, are ſcrutinized with cruel ſeverity in thoſe who ſolicit for relief. That conduct which is only the effect of a thoughtleſs imprudenee, is often attributed to a baſeneſs of heart.

heart. The vulgar proverb contains much truth, which ſays, "It is an eaſy matter to find a ſtick "to beat a dog."—An avaricious man ſeldom fails to find occaſion for with-holding alms from thoſe whoſe hard lot it is to ſolicit him; but the man whoſe ſoul is dilated with the fervour of true benevolence, is leſs ſolicitous to enquire by what means the poor are reduced to diſtreſs, than to find out and apply the means to relieve them from it. It is certainly better, far better, to relieve two unworthy objects, than to leave one deſtitute who is really worthy.

WHERE charity fails, all profeſſion of religion is vain, and mere mockery in the ſight of GOD: indeed it is ſo eſſential a part of true religion, that we find our Saviour has made it the criterion of our acceptance in the awful hour of everlaſting deciſion, when only the merciful ſhall obtain mercy, and "enter into the joy of their Lord."

BE careful to avoid intemperance of every kind; it is equally prejudicial to the mind and body; for by injuring the latter, the former is debilitated, and confined in its operations. The moſt noble faculties of the ſoul loſe their vigour, and become incapable of performing their proper functions, while the body is affected by intemperance.

OUR

Our external organs are the inlets to ſenſation, and, in proportion to the perfection of theſe organs, will be the acuteneſs of our mental perceptions. Such are the imperfections that attend human nature, and ſo limited is the operation of our intellectual powers in this ſtate of being, that we meet with innumerable obſtructions in our reſearches and progreſs in the attainment of knowledge and true happineſs. Great care is requiſite, therefore, to keep thoſe channels of communication open and free, through which intelligence is conveyed to the mind; and alſo to preſerve thoſe faculties from injury and reſtraint which are the ſuperior excellence of our nature.

He who intemperately gratifies appetites and paſſions, in themſelves lawful, becomes guilty of a breach of that ſupreme law of reaſon and moral rectitude, which the Deity has implanted as the primary rule of action in every mind. There is a certain point which terminates the ſafety of indulgence; and, in many caſes, it is unſafe to approach too near thoſe boundaries which it were criminal to paſs. It is a mark of true wiſdom to deny ourſelves in ſome things indifferent in their nature, leſt, by indulgence, they prove ſuch ſtrong incitements to intemperance as our feeble endeavours may at times be unable to withſtand.

The man who is addicted to drunkenneſs ought not to truſt himſelf in the convivial circle; or (in the words of the Oriental moraliſt) "to "look upon the wine when it ſparkles in the cup." Let him who has an itch for gaming refrain from the company of thoſe inſignificant beings, who have few ideas except thoſe excited by a pack of cards, and who ſeem incapable of converſation except a few game phraſes, which, like parrots, they have learned to repeat by rote.

Let not the epicure accept invitations to luxurious entertainments, leſt, in ſo doing, he face an enemy whom he has not reſolution or ſtrength to conquer. It is better to retreat from danger, than to fall a ſacrifice in an unequal combat. Intemperance hath, by ſome, been indulged even in the purſuit of their ſtudies. The pleaſures ariſing from reading and contemplation are the moſt refined and exalted of any we can experience in this ſtate of being; yet even theſe may be ſo intemperately indulged, as to loſe their fineſt effect on the mind. Silence is to the ſoul, what ſleep is to the body. If we read too long, even in the works of the moſt elegant authors, or ſtudy too intenſely on the moſt agreeable ſubjects, pleaſure ſubſides into a languid indifference: we loſe that acute reliſh with which we began, and often pronounce the author dull, or the ſubject tedious

or

or obſcure, when the cauſe is, that our percipient faculties are fatigued and relaxed by intemperate application: but by uſing theſe, as well as inferior pleaſures, with temperance and diſcretion, and unbending our attention when the faculties become tired with exerciſe, we preſerve the noble ſources of mental pleaſure unimpaired, and are free from the languor of ſatiety.

INTEMPERANCE, in its various ſpecies and degrees, is the bane of human felicity,—it is not only inconſiſtent with moral rectitude, the good of others, and that decency of manners and character, which is moſt becoming us as chriſtians; but becomes the means of leſſening thoſe pleaſures, both ſenſitive and intellectual, which the gracious author of our being conſtituted us capable of enjoying.

AN intemperate man degrades himſelf from his proper rank in the ſcale of life; relinquiſhes the nobleſt privileges of his nature; quits his dignity as a being allied to angels; and ignobly deſcends to a level with the beaſts that periſh.

THIS is ſorrowfully evident in caſes of ebriety, where the rational faculties of the ſoul are ſuſpended till the power of intoxication ceaſes to operate. Did not every day afford proofs of its reality, we ſhould naturally imagine that ſhame alone would prevent

prevent ſuch depravation in reaſonable beings: were it not a ſin in the ſight of that God who made us, and eſpieth all our ways, the juſt ſcandal it brings on a man, thus to degrade himſelf, ought ſurely to prevent it; and excite us to practiſe that temperance and ſobriety, which moſt eſſentially promote our happineſs, both ſenſual and intellectual.

LETTER V.

THE ſhort interval in human life which lies between infancy and manhood is generally the moſt pleaſing and happy. In this ſeaſon objects ſtrike the mind more forcibly than in riper age, and the impreſſions it receives are frequently ſtronger and more laſting; but it is a ſeaſon replete with danger. For want of experience in men and things, young minds are too frequently led into the paths of deception and error. In their ſearch after happineſs, they often chaſe a phantom that eludes their graſp, or graſp a bubble which is unſubſtantial, and "baſeleſs as the "fabric of a viſion." Where unmixed pleaſure is expected, they frequently meet with diſappointment;

ment; and in their progreſs through life, find cauſe to join in the concluding declaration of the wiſeſt of men, that "All is vanity and vexation "of ſpirit." If He, whom the Almighty had dignified with a ſuperior portion of wiſdom, and encompaſſed with riches and honour,—He who gratified every deſire, in the poſſeſſion of all that earth could yield, and "with-held not from his "heart any joy;"—if He, thus ſurrounded with plenty, eſtabliſhed in peace, and dignified with wiſdom and honour above the reſt of the ſons of men, found *all* to be "vanity and vexation of ſpi-"rit," how vain muſt our expectations be to find complete happineſs in more circumſcribed acquiſitions!

Human Society is compoſed of innumerable beings, whoſe views, affections, and intereſts, diverge in innumerable directions. Hence ariſe diſcord, contrariety of purſuit, and a ſeeming irreconcilable oppoſition in the formation and execution of their various plans of action. Self-love, and ſocial, are (as Pope juſtly obſerves) the ſame in their nature and end: Like the centripetal and centrifugal powers in the planetary world, they may be conſidered as the active and connecting principles in the moral ſyſtem: the former, by being conſtantly under the immediate agency of the Supreme Architect, are ſtill preſerved in their primeval

meval harmony and order;—but the latter, from man's natural imbecility and proneneſs to vary from the eternal unchangeable rules of moral rectitude and truth, are perverted from their original deſign, and diſordered in their operation. Hence it frequently happens, that ſelf-love predominates over that which is ſocial, and produces actions highly injurious to public happineſs. That benevolent regard, and kind affection, which ought to extend in a juſt and beautiful gradation to relatives, friends, neighbours, and the whole circle of mankind, is often concentered in ſelf-love. Hence proceeds that inſatiable thirſt after wealth, fame, and honour, which excites men to employ every ſpecies of cunning, fraud, and cruelty, to obtain them.

The miſer, whom nothing but gold can ſatisfy, and who to obtain it will practiſe every ſpecies of artful oppreſſion, without feeling, and without remorſe, is inſenſible of that ſocial regard, that diffuſive benevolence, which delights in rendering others happy. He hugs his beloved ore, nay, he worſhips it! He is ſo intoxicated with the idea of increaſing wealth, that nothing but death can diſſolve the charm, and convince him that "all is "vanity."

The ſoldier, whoſe mind is unconſcious of tender ſenſations, and who pants only for thoſe laurels

rels of victory, which a ſoil bedewed with the blood of thouſands can alone produce, is a ſlave to ſelf-love;—regardleſs of the juſtice of his cauſe, and of that deſolation which he ſpreads over provinces and kingdoms, he feels no pity for the miſeries of thoſe he ſlaughters; but triumphs in the deſtruction of thouſands, to gain the character of an hero. Strange it is that man ſhould be ſo deſirous of that empty bubble FAME, as to commit ſuch horrid depredations to acquire it!—Still more ſtrange, that almoſt all nations, in every age, ſhould concur in feeding this diabolical ambition, by affixing titles of honour to thoſe deſtroyers of mankind, who deſerve rather to be marked with diſgrace and infamy, and become the contempt and abhorrence of all ſucceeding generations!—Let a proper view of their motives and conduct inſpire the youth of this age with a generous indignation againſt actions ſo horrid, and alſo againſt that wicked principle from whence they ſpring.

ONE of the moſt amiable and glorious titles given to the Saviour of the world is, that he was the "Prince of Peace;"—and the great end of his coming into the world was to eſtabliſh peace and happineſs, by putting an end to that ſpirit of diſcord and enmity which excites to the depopulation of kingdoms.

From ſelf-love ſprings Detraction,—a vice as cruel and mean as any that lurks in the mind of man. I have not ſcrutinized the characters of my fellow-creatures with an uncharitable eye, neither would I be too general, or too ſevere, in my cenſure; but I fear the greater part of mankind are more or leſs guilty of detraction. This diſeaſe has infected every rank of the people; even thoſe from "whoſe lips (ſhould) flow the law of kind-"neſs," are not the leaſt free from it: their private converſation too often gives the lie to their public precepts.

Self-Love is the ſpring that ſets the tongue of the detractor in motion; by depreciating the characters of others he thinks to exalt his own, and render it more conſpicuous. In little minds and contracted underſtandings, this vice is moſt prevalent: ſuch, not having ſufficient capacity or virtue to attract the notice of others, vainly and vilely endeavour to raiſe a momentary reputation on the ruins of abſent characters. Hypocriſy and low cunning are inſeparable attendants on detractors. Such is the malignity of this vice, that the moſt innocent are in the greateſt danger of having their reputation cruelly tortured, if not ruined, by theſe butchers. Reputation is to a virtuous man a jewel of ineſtimable value: this the detractor knows by theory, though not by experience;

rience; and yet he takes a ſavage pleaſure in committing the moſt cruel robbery that a good man can ſuffer. Well might the admired poet ſay,

"He who ſteals my purſe, ſteals traſh,

(in compariſon of the richer treaſure of a good character)

"But he who filches from me my good name,
"Robs me of that which not enriches him,
"But leaves me poor indeed."

THERE are many who, under the maſk of hypocriſy and outſide ſanctity, ſecretly exult in finding the ſmalleſt occaſion of expoſing the failings of the abſent: they paint every weakneſs in the moſt aggravated colours throughout the circle of their friends. It ſhould ſeem as though they thought the expoſing other men's ſins was a ſufficient expiation of their own.—This practice, in ſome, proceeds from a mean deſire of being thought free themſelves from that imprudence they cenſure in others; ſometimes, from a talkative diſpoſition, without ideas ſufficient to furniſh matter for any other converſation; and too often from that baſeneſs and depravity of heart in which they find no pleaſure equal to that of mangling the reputation of others. Of all the motives to this diabolical practice, the laſt-mentioned is the worſt; and perhaps there is not, in the whole catalogue of human crimes, one more black in its nature.

DETRACTION introduces innumerable evils,—deſtroys at once the peace of individuals, and of families,—diſſolves the ſacred cementing ties of friendſhip,—introduces diſorder into civil ſociety,—wounds, irreparably wounds, the innocent—fixes an envenomed dart in the breaſt of virtue,—and deſtroys that univerſal bond which ſhould connect all mankind in a peaceful and happy union.

BE therefore careful not only to check the firſt tendency of this evil diſpoſition in yourſelves, but to give it due diſcouragement in others. It is indeed a "peſtilence that walketh in darkneſs." Continue not in the company of a detractor—hold no converſe with ſuch an enemy; the ſame wicked diſpoſition that excites him to depreciate the characters of others in your hearing will prompt him to put yours on the rack in the next company he enters.

"SPEAK evil of no man," is a precept of Divine authority. It is excellent in its nature, and worthy your ſtrict attention. This precept not only prohibits us from accuſing each other falſely, but alſo from making the real failings and miſconduct of others the ſubject of converſation. Rather let us repreſent each other's characters in the moſt favourable light—draw the veil of charity over the imperfections of our neighbours, and be very cautious of ſaying any thing to the prejudice

dice even of our enemies. That love which chriſtianity enjoins us to ſhew forth, even to enemies, will not admit of our wantonly expoſing their miſconduct—much leſs will it allow us to ſport with the weapons of unjuſt detraction, and wound the reputation of the innocent, by caſting abroad "firebrands, arrows, and death."

LETTER VI.

I HAVE already mentioned READING as a neceſſary employment for youth; and alſo recommended it, under the head of Amuſements. In this letter I ſhall conſider the ſubject more at large. Reading ought not to be confined to mere amuſement: this is its loweſt uſe;—it may be rendered ſubſervient to more noble purpoſes, and contribute to the improvement of our faculties, and to the enlargement of our knowledge. Permit me, therefore, to enforce the practice, while I give ſome caution reſpecting your choice of authors.

IN books well choſen, the wiſdom and experience of paſt ages are preſerved for the benefit of the

preſent and ſucceeding generations. But ſuch is the depraved taſte of many, that books, the moſt dangerous in their nature, and hurtful in their tendency, are moſt read, eſpecially by youth. Almoſt every performance of a ſerious kind, is generally either neglected or treated with the contemptuous epithet of enthuſiaſm. On the contrary, the impious buffoonery, falſe wit, and indelicacy of a Rocheſter, a Haywood, a Behn, a Voltaire*, a Foote, a Pilkington, a Congreve, and others, of the laſt and preſent ages, are the delight of the gay, the volatile, and the inconſiderate. A ſad proof this, that our endeavours to promote thoſe excellent purpoſes of mental improvement, from which life derives its value, and the wiſdom of a nation is beſt eſtimated, have not kept pace with our boaſted refinements in ſcience, taſte, and genius; for notwithſtanding the falſe eſtimation in which ſuch writings are held by the ſons of folly, they are and muſt be rejected with contempt, by every truly rational and virtuous mind. Let them therefore be avoided as the worſt of poiſon, for ſo they really are to thoſe who delight in them.

If you are deſirous of literary amuſement and inſtruction, there are a great variety of ancient as well as modern productions, in which profit and delight are beautifully blended. In this reſpect the Sacred

* I mean not to include the *whole* of this author's works under the above cenſure.

Sacred Scriptures ſtand the firſt of all compoſitions. If you wiſh to explore antiquity, here are found the earlieſt and moſt authentic records. If you want moral precepts, the inſtructions of Divine wiſdom, or a diſplay of the wonders of Providence, they are here delineated with preciſion, ſimplicity, and grandeur. If you are delighted with true eloquence, refined ſentiments, poetic imagery, majeſtic diction, or the moſt tender pathetic language, they are here united in all their force, and affect the mind with the ſtrongeſt and moſt pleaſing emotions. But although theſe beauties of ſtile, ſentiment, and poetic harmony, are here united in one grand point of view, they are alſo interſperſed in the productions of many modern writers: they ſtand conſpicuous in thoſe living monuments which an Addiſon, a Milton, a Steele, a Tillotſon, a Penn, a Forſter, a Fordyce, a Young, a Blair, a Melmoth, a Hawkeſworth, a Langhorne, a More, an Aikin, &c. have raiſed to virtue and to fame.*

The eaſy, yet manly eloquence and ſublimity of ſentiment that appear in ſome of theſe authors, and the animated piety that glows in the pages of the

* It is with pleaſure that I embrace the preſent opportunity of recommending, to my *Fair Readers* in particular, the very ingenious and valuable Eſſay on Education, lately written by Hannah More, a performance which does honour to the underſtanding and to the heart of its author; and which is excellently adapted to improve the minds and conduct of thoſe to whom it is addreſſed.

the reſt, will afford the ſenſible reader both improvement and delight. To neglect ſuch a feaſt of delicacies, for the ſake of "battening on a moor," where no wholſome food can be found—where the fruits, though fair to the eye, are, like the apples of Sodom, filled only with bitter aſhes, incapable of affording any ſubſtantial nouriſhment, is ſurely a ſad proof that our mental taſte is depraved, and that we have loſt our reliſh for rational entertainment.

That we may "judge of a man by the company he keeps," is an ancient proverbial truth: and it is no leſs certain, that the diſpoſition of a man's mind, and his intellectual taſte, may in general be aſcertained from a knowledge of what books he beſt likes to read.

If we look into the libraries of our youth, we generally find them furniſhed with novels, romances, and plays. Can we wonder then, that their ſentiments are improper, and their conduct incompatible with that prudence and propriety of manners which beſt conduce to human happineſs?

Novels and plays have been injurious to thouſands: they may in general aptly be compared to that ſpecies of natural poiſon, which operates inſenſibly, while it deſtroys the vitals of the human conſtitution;

conſtitution: their operation on the mind is not felt but by its conſequence, and often too late to be eaſily remedied.

They amuſe, ſoften, and enervate the mind; lull it into an inattention to its important duties: relax the ſprings of that ſteady maſculine virtue, which alone inſures peace and happineſs; and, by degrees, reconcile objects to its view, which the exerciſe of reaſon and prudence would diſcover to be its moſt dangerous enemies.

I know the ſtale pretence of novel-writers is, to exhibit a moral leſſon in a pleaſing tale, and to paint "the manners living as they riſe." By this artifice they introduce their productions to many innocent minds; but theſe pretenſions have not been realized by one in a thouſand. The generality of novels exhibit unnatural and falſe pictures of life; and abound with expreſſions which excite improper ideas, and ſentiments very injurious to morality. Few novels, except thoſe written by that ſhining ornament of human nature, the late S. Richardſon, and the ingenious author of Sir George Elliſon, can properly lay claim to ſubſtantial merit, and claſſic elegance.

In their writings, (which indeed rather exhibit what men ought to be, than what they are) virtue ſtands arrayed in her native charms, and every amiable

amiable accompliſhment of the mind is beautifully depictured; but few others, that I have ſeen, can be read with ſafety by youth. Many, in proportion to their power of pleaſing, are deſtructive of morality, and decorated with roſes, which conceal the thorn till it has wounded the breaſt of virtue.

Novel-writers pretend to declaim loudly againſt vice, but implant its ſecret principles in the mind by painting it in ſuch alluring colours as catch the reader's attention; and frequently in their portraits of virtue repreſent her rather as an object of ridicule than eſteem.

Let but a young woman fill her head with the ideal happineſs of a novel heroine, and the equally ideal perfections of the young gentleman who ſolicits her hand, and ſo miſled will be her imagination, that it is improbable ſhe ſhould be qualified either to give or receive ſuch a portion of felicity as human beings are capacitated to enjoy and communicate. That happineſs, which is placed within her reach, will be deemed too low and trifling for her to ſeek after, becauſe her imagination is on the wing in ſearch of a mere phantom, which flies while ſhe vainly purſues it. She will therefore be perpetually harraſſed with diſappointment, repine at her lot, and become unfit for the performance

performance of thoſe ſocial and domeſtic duties, which become the wife, the parent, and the friend.

THE ſame inconveniences will attend a young man who forms his ideas of the fair ſex, and of the happineſs enjoyed in a connection with them, from the falſe pictures exhibited in romance. He will probably draw her portrait beyond real life, and expect to find her as free from imperfection as a BYRON, or a CLEMENTINA. Under this deception, when married, he will be much diſappointed to find her ſubject to female frailties; and that, however amiable, ſhe is not that angel his fond fancy had formed her. The deception which JACOB formerly experienced is realized—he expects a RACHAEL, but finds a LEAH.

HENCE much of that unhappineſs enſues which ſpreads a gloom over the married ſtate;—when the parties who engage in wedlock expect to find that excellence in each other, which human beings cannot arrive at, it is no wonder the fallacious picture they have been admiring is never realized, or that their expectations ſhould end in diſappointment and diſguſt.

IT will conduce much to your happineſs to be on your guard in this reſpect. If you enter the ſacred connection of marriage, from motives of real affection, with thoſe who are truly eſtimable,

and conduct yourſelves in that ſtation prudently and diſcreetly, you will find it the moſt deſirable and happy ſtate, even a "perpetual fountain of "domeſtic ſweets."

But to return to the ſubject of reading.—If you peruſe the Scriptures with a ſuitable diſpoſition of mind, they will afford you profit and delight: for they were given for our inſtruction in the way of righteouſneſs, and are "able, through Faith in "Chriſt Jeſus, to make us wiſe unto ſalvation."

It is this wiſdom which Solomon has ſo beautifully and juſtly deſcribed, as an ineſtimable treaſure that will endure for ever. Let this wiſdom be the primary object of your choice; and ſeek it under the ſacred direction of the fear of God.—"In her right hand are length of days, and in her "left, riches and honour.—Her ways are ways of "pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace.—She "is a Tree of Life to all them that lay hold upon "her, and happy is every one that retaineth her. "—She rejoiceth in the habitable parts of the "earth, and her delight is with the ſons of men."

This divine wiſdom is the bounteous gift of the Deity, to dignify humanity, and reward thoſe who embrace and profit by it, with the glories of eternity. Wiſdom addreſſes you, in the moſt tender, pathetic language, to chooſe her for the lot of your

your inheritance; reject not her kind invitations, but through the viciſſitudes of time be guided by her counſel, and ſhe will finally conduct you into Glory.

LETTER VII.

FROM the ſerious import of theſe letters, it may perhaps be expected, that ſomething ſhould be added more particularly relating to the great duties of Religion, and the different modes of worſhip that obtain in the chriſtian world: But as it is not my intention to controvert any particular points of faith, or to arraign the principles or practice of any diſtinct ſocieties, I ſhall only add a few general obſervations thereon, which I hope may be of ſome ſervice to all my readers, without giving juſt cauſe of offence to any.

RELIGION has too generally been ſuppoſed to conſiſt in an aſſent to certain Articles of Faith deemed Orthodox, and in the performance of certain external rites and ceremonies, which men have been taught to believe would entitle them to God's favour, and his glorious promiſes in the

Goſpel Covenant. But I think both Reaſon and Scripture will juſtify me, in defining Religion to be—a conformity in will, affection, and action, to the will of God, as manifeſted in the Sacred Scriptures, and revealed in the conſcience or mind of man. Every thing ſhort of this is defective.

By relying on the bare belief of articles of Faith, or reſting in the performance of external rites, men have miſtaken the ſhadow for the ſubſtance,—overlooked the eſſential part of Religion, and ſubſtituted in its place things not only foreign to its nature, but injurious to its intrinſic excellence. They have been contenting themſelves with exterior rites and obſervances—with the aſſent of the lip and of the tongue, to the great truths of the Goſpel, without ſeeking to have their hearts ſo rectified and changed by its purifying influence, as to produce that rectitude of life and manners, which is the genuine fruit of the Spirit, and renders men acceptable to God.

The Apoſtle, in his deſcription of Religion, has repreſented it very differently from the Creed-makers, and Syſtem-mongers of later ages. "Pure Religion, and undefiled, before God and "the Father, is this, to viſit the fatherleſs and "widow in their affliction, and to keep yourſelves "unſpotted in the world."

THE Prophet MICAH alſo, after having ſhewn the inſufficiency of external ceremonies and obſervances, even under the legal diſpenſation, proceeds to ſet forth the true nature of that Religion which is moſt acceptable to God: "He hath "ſhewed thee, O man, what is good; and what "doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to "do juſtly, love mercy, and walk humbly with "thy God? Shall I count them pure with the "wicked balance, and the bag of deceitful weights?

THESE are ſhort but comprehenſive precepts; they contain a prohibition of all vice, and enforce the ſteady obſervance of thoſe duties, ſocial, moral, and religious, which are univerſally obligatory on us from our ſtation, the various relations we ſtand in to other beings, and to GOD, our Creator and Judge. Whoſoever practiſeth theſe duties under an humble ſenſe of love to God, and in obedience to his commands, is a real Chriſtian, let his name to Religion be what it may. The God and Father of the Spirits of all fleſh doth not reject any merely becauſe they may not have clear ideas of abſtruſe and ſpeculative points of Divinity; but he regards men in proportion to the integrity of their hearts, and the uprightneſs of their actions. It is not the religion we profeſs, but our conformity of will, affection, and conduct to the divine principle of unchangeable truth and righteouſneſs,

righteouſneſs, that will entitle us to the favour of God here, and acceptance with him when time ſhall be no more. Names and diſtinctions may procure the regard or cenſure of ſhort-ſighted mortals, but will not avail us in that awful diſcriminating period whereunto we are haſtening.

The pious Hartley juſtly obſerves, that "he "who is made perfect in the love of God and his "neighbour, is got beyond all diſtinctions, and to "the end of every church under Heaven." I freely concur with him in this ſentiment; for it is the genuine language of that univerſal charity, which is the moſt excellent of all chriſtian graces, and ſtrongly inculcated by the Great Founder of the chriſtian religion, as the beſt diſpoſition in which we can approach the Divine Majeſty, in the ſolemn exerciſe of religious duties.

If you are not diſſatisfied in any material point, with the principles of that particular ſociety wherein you have been educated, ſeek not to change. Some errors may, perhaps, be blended with truth in all the different ſyſtems of religion profeſſed in Chriſtendom: for we muſt not pronounce any of them free from imperfection. Be rather diligent in practical duties, than too curious in ſpeculative niceties, which are not eſſential to preſent or future happineſs; copy after every thing uſeful and excellent, in the various ſocieties amongſt

amongſt us; and avoid whatever, after mature conſideration, you cannot approve.

REJECT with horror every ſentiment that tends to eclipſe the luſtre of the divine perfections,—that repreſents the Deity as an arbitrary, capricious, and changeable being,—that aſcribes to him parts, paſſions, or imperfections,—as being partial to any of his creatures,—or that limits the univerſality of his grace and love to mankind. Every ſentiment of this kind is highly irrational, and derogates from his awful and amiable character, while they ſpread a ſhade over his glorious attributes.

THE leſs of bigotry, prieſtcraft, and ſuperſtition, and the more of chriſtian charity and benevolence that appear in any ſyſtem of religion, the more excellent it is in its nature, and uſeful to mankind. Let not, therefore, a difference in opinion reſpecting modes of worſhip, occaſion you to ridicule, cenſure, or perſecute in the leaſt degree, any other religious ſociety: for, ſuppoſing ſuch to be wrong, you will not be accountable for their errors; and to perſecute or ridicule them, is wickedneſs.

THERE is nothing more inconſiſtent with reaſon or chriſtianity, than perſecution. Were it lawful for one party to exerciſe this diſpoſition, it would be ſo for all—and were all to practiſe it, the chriſtian world

world would ſoon become an Aceldama, or field of blood.

The hands of every perſecutor ought (like thoſe of other madmen) to be bound by a general combination of the reſt of mankind.

It is not a difference of opinion, but the blind fury of paſſionate zealots, that has defaced the beauty of chriſtianity, and rendered her the ſcorn of infidels. Chriſtian communion may be well preſerved without an exact circumſtantial uniformity of ſentiment and mode of worſhip.

It is not the form of words or mode of worſhip, but the diſpoſition of the mind, that ſtamps a value on the oblation, and renders it acceptable to the Deity.

Be diligent in attending your ſeveral places of worſhip; and, when there, obſerve a becoming decorum. Let nothing divert your attention from the awful duty you come there to perform; but remember you are in the immediate preſence of that Divine Majeſty, to whom the mere ſervice of the lip and of the tongue is an abomination.

To confeſs our ſins and forſake them, is our indiſpenſible duty; but to go on time after time in verbally

verbally confeſſing *without* forſaking them, is only ſolemn mockery in the ſight of God.

Such a practice is certainly offenſive in the ſight of him to whom the prayers of the wicked are an abomination; while in the performance of public religious ſervices, they thus approach his Holineſs with a lie in their right hand.

Mercy is the darling attribute of the Almighty, and glorioufly extended over all his works. But remember, he is alſo a God of juſtice, and will execute it on the hardened and impenitent in the day of retribution.

Thoſe, whom the Divine mercy and forbearance could not reclaim, muſt have their portion in the regions of woe. Nothing vicious, impure, or that loveth and maketh a lie, can have its reſidence in that ſtate of felicity, where God eternally dwells. If we believe the Sacred Scriptures, it is thoſe only, who, through obedience to the manifeſtations of Divine Grace, are *redeemed from all iniquity*, and *renewed in the image of God*, that can inherit eternal life.

Let not, therefore, the prevalence of paſſions, the allurements of pleaſure, or the little intereſts of an hour, divert your attention from things more excellent.—Seek that happineſs which is immortal

in its nature and everlaſting in its duration.—Reflect on the dignity of your nature; debaſe not yourſelves by becoming ſlaves to your paſſions; but keep them in a due ſubjection to your reaſon. Contemplate, with awful reverence, the prime end of your being, and humbly adore that Goodneſs which has rendered you capable of being happy for ever.

NOTHING ſhort of the moſt diſintereſted benevolence could have induced GOD (who was from all eternity infinitely happy in himſelf, and complete in his own perfections) to call mankind into exiſtence. The original deſign was unſpeakably great and glorious, and intitles its gracious Author to the conſtant tribute of reverence and adoration.

MAN was created "a little," and perhaps but a little "lower than the Angels:" He was dignified with a portion of divine intelligence, which was placed in him as "the Candle of the LORD," lighted up of Heavenly fire, and deſigned to burn with increaſing luſtre for ever. By this light he might contemplate the wonderful works of his Divine Author, and, in the preſent ſtate of exiſtence, maintain a holy intercourſe with his Maker, in order to prepare himſelf for a perfect and happy union with the glorified Spirits of the juſt in the Celeſtial Regions.

LET

Let not any deem this a ſally of wild enthuſiaſm:—to be cold and inſipid on ſuch a theme, would betray a criminal inſenſibility. If I am warmed on the great occaſion, it is the grandeur of the ſubject that animates my language. Under theſe glowing ſenſations, I write the ſpontaneous dictates of my heart; and the ſneer of folly, the ſcoff of the libertine, or the cenſure of cold ſeverity, will have no other effect than to excite my pity.

Finally,—I ſincerely wiſh my readers to accept theſe hints, with the ſame diſpoſition that gave them birth. They are the produce of a benevolent intention; and, if duly regarded, I hope may prove uſeful.

It is neither a view to intereſt nor applauſe, that influences my pen, but a real deſire that you may improve by the cautions given you to your own advantage, both in time and in eternity. In order to do this, read them with ſerioufneſs and attention, in the hours of cool recollection,—conſider their import, and give them due weight in your minds; remember that, although you are now in the bloom of life, time will quickly terminate,—and all terreſtrial objects will "vaniſh as a "ſcroll,"—all that now "ſparkles in the eye of "hope," or pants in the boſom of deſire, will quickly loſe its power of pleaſing; and the ſolemn

hour is approaching, when every thing that relates not to the intereſts of a better country, will appear vain and unavailing.

THERE is nothing permanent beneath the ſtars; —uncertainty and decay is the univerſal Inſcription on all ſublunary things! You are haſtening to an eternal abode;—although the hours of Infancy were but as yeſterday, to-morrow may centre you in an unchangeable ſtate.

I THEREFORE now bid you adieu, with the beſt wiſhes for your progreſs and eſtabliſhment in that path of virtue, which terminates in "Joy unſpeak-"able and full of Glory."

MENTOR.

15 JY 64